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ABSTRACT

This handbook of culturally responsive ways to teach the basic, mandated curriculum to students from diverse backgrounds was developed by a multicultural group of teachers. The techniques draw on the students' diverse backgrounds to increase student motivation and maximize teacher effectiveness by decreasing the mismatch between the students' home and school environments. The following topics are discussed: (1) creating a family atmosphere in the classroom; (2) weaving culture into the mathematics, science, and language arts curriculum; (3) using student-to-student, student-to-adult, and teacher-to-student interviewing; (4) cooperative learning techniques for elementary and middle school classrooms; (5) tried and true ideas for celebrating cultural diversity; (6) brief case studies to help develop appropriate responses to inappropriate expressions of intolerance among colleagues; (7) strategies for monolingual teachers of bilingual students; (8) strategies for teaching black children; (9) suggestions from Vietnamese parents for teaching their children; and (10) strategies for teaching Cambodian students. A list of 13 resources and brief biographies of the contributors are appended. (FMW)

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DRAWING ON DIVERSITY:

A Handbook of Effective Teaching Techniques for the Multicultural Classroom

By and for Teachers in the Boston Public Schools, North Zone

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DRAWING ON DIVERSITY:

A Handbook for and by Boston Teachers in Multicultural, Multiracial Classrooms

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1990

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PREFACE

There are some excellent publications for teachers on multicultural curriculum. This is not one of them. Instead of creating another curriculum guide with which to overwhelm teachers, we decided that there was a need to find more effective and more culturally responsive ways of teaching the mandated curriculum to students from diverse cultural backgrounds.

During the fall and winter of 1989, I taught a talented, multicultural group of Boston teachers in a graduate level course organized by the North Zone office and Boston University, funded through Chapter 636. We investigated how to draw on the wealth of students' diverse backgrounds so as to increase student motivation and maximize teacher effectiveness. We explored what school was like for students from different cultures, and how to use aspects of "deep culture" to improve communication and bring out the best in each student.

We looked at what the research had to say. We listened to guest speakers. We did ethnographic interviews. And we worked together to develop practical approaches which teachers tried out in their classrooms. Individually and then together, we evaluated the strengths and weaknesses of new and old techniques, synthesizing participants' experiences into contributions for this handbook.

The techniques presented here enable teachers to reach students more effectively because they make the learning process more interactive, more supportive, and more personal. These suggestions also work because they send a message to students that their participation in the school culture need not entail a choice between their cultural identity and the demands of the school. This handbook suggests ways of creating a learning environment which is culturally additive.

Documenting the cultural mismatch between schools and students' homes is the focus of an increasing number of research studies. This handbook is a practical, innovative approach to matching up teaching practices with what students from diverse backgrounds need in order to learn best.

— Virginia Vogel Zanger

INTRODUCTION

The North Zone has the most diversified student population in the city of Boston.

We have bilingual programs in seven languages: Spanish, Chinese, Cape Verdian, Vietnamese, Portuguese, Italian, and Cambodian. Total enrollment in bilingual programs is approximately 4,000 — at 19 different schools.

This handbook came about as a result of a course in Intercultural Education in which we realized that many topics need to be addressed in order to create a better climate in our classrooms for students of diverse cultures.

We realize that dealing with many cultures can be difficult but more importantly we feel that with the diversity comes a richness that would be hard to duplicate in a monocultural class.

We hope some of the techniques presented here will help you to...

✓ eliminate misconceptions

✓ improve communication

✓ create an atmosphere of greater appreciation for you and your students.

✓ and bring out that richness that is well within your reach.

Ignoring or trying to erase the diversity we find in our classes does not work. Instead, we need to find ways of drawing on that diversity to enhance the educational experience. That is what this handbook is about.

Note: The ideas expressed here represent the opinions of the individual authors and not necessarily those of the Boston Public Schools.

AT HOME IN SCHOOL:

CREATING A FAMILY ATMOSPHERE IN THE CLASSROOM

Success in the classroom depends upon the total comfort a student feels at school. Some students dislike school solely because the school climate is so different from what they experience at home and in their community.

So what makes the difference? Most often, homes and community are built upon love, understanding and a shared sense of mutuality and reciprocity. There are agreed upon, negotiated goals. Together, people have formally and informally agreed to contract with each other for the purpose of accomplishing both explicit, named goals as well as implicit, mutually understood goals.

Students growing up in a family and community are introduced to the goals that are incorporated into family and community life. Students are charged with partial responsibility for helping the family/community to meet these goals. In the family and in the community, students are given permission, encouraged, and expected to become full cooperative members.

Schools do not operate like this. Once in a while a student may be made to feel as if the purpose of schooling cannot be accomplished without his or her cooperation and participation. Most often, however, students are made to feel as if they are in some kind of foreign field, where they must work, fight, and often deny who they are as persons, in order to acquiesce to the demands of the school community. Schools come off as being less caring, less interested in the issues of mutuality and reciprocity. Instead of understanding students and their needs as a part of a cooperative endeavor, schools often make students feel powerless, like objects in a production line, rather than as creative forces helping to direct their own education.

Often, students are not able to speak for themselves, and when they do, their comments go unheard. There are, however, alternative solutions to this dilemma.

> STUDENTS CAN BE HELPED TO FEEL AS IF SCHOOL IS AN EXTENSION OF THEIR NUCLEAR FAMILY, AND NOT SOME APPENDAGE THAT HAS BEEN IMPOSED ON THEIR LIVES.

This can be done in several ways.

First, taking interest in the lives of students apart from the daily school routines tells them that you care about them and understand that they are persons, not simply students. It's a good model to share your weekend adventures, trials, errors and successes with your students. One need not get totally intimate for students to get a sense of who you, the teacher, are as a person. Students know that they have other lives away from school. They appreciate knowing that teachers are humans too.

Secondly, students know when you genuinely care about them. Creating a family atmosphere means being in relationship with your students as if you were their parents, yet never overstepping the boundary lines by trying to replace their parents.

This usually means going beyond just the normal teacher-student relationship, yet not going so far that students do not recognize you for the job that you do. To be sure, finding that fine dividing line is not easy. Being a teacher with a parental shadow about you means knowing when to demand adherance to a rule and when and how to let rules slide by, while at the same time making sure that students know that you are in control. It also means caring about students as if they were your own child yet knowing that you ultimately do not have final authority. And it means helping students with unmet needs, but remembering you are still teacher.

Finally, implementing and maintaining a family-like climate in your school/class means always being in touch with the students' families and helping students to assimilate the ideas, hopes, and dreams from home with what they accomplish at school. Students are most comfortable with you when you are able to relate what they do at school to the value system at home. And parents appreciate it and relate to the school and to you differently when they know that school and home are as close to one as it is possible to be, without being one. Here are some of the specific ways that some of us carry out this philosophy in our teaching:

We praise our students when they do a good job and tell them how proud their parents are going to be. But we also model that pride since the parents are not there.

Counseling becomes a constant. When we counsel we do it from a familial perspective. We talk to the students as if they were our own children. And students know the difference.

Sometimes, we take students home with us.

20 TIPS FOR CREATING A FAMILY ATMOSPHERE IN CLASSROOMS

1 Once in a while, invite a parent to the classroom to observe the class.

2 Develop a good relationship with students' parents. Work with the parents to improve kids' performance. Parents should know what is expected of them and of their children. Send home a weekly notice about activities to stay in contact with parents on a consistent basis.

3 Ask the parents for any cultural or social help they can provide.

4 If it is possible, visit the students at home once a year. This is a wonderful opportunity to get to know the environment in which students live and to obtain a better understanding of students' behavior.

5 Every week, have students tell what they did over the week-end, what relatives they visited.

6 Allow students to use colloquial language in the classroom, not just standard English or the standard native language. At the same time, work with them to make them aware of appropriate contexts for the many kinds of language they use.

7 During recess, play with them.

8 Share lunch with students sometimes.

9 If they bring you candy, fruit, or simple things, always accept their offerings; do not ignore or reject them.

10 Give students a chance to share objects or family pictures which they bring in from home, as well as their ideas.

11 Allow students to bring guests to the classroom occasionally: family members or students from other classes.

12 Prepare students to play the teacher. Even kindergarteners enjoy role-playing principal.

13 Give students a chance to create clubs, electing a president, secretary, and writing by-laws. You can do this as a whole class, too.

14 Let students decorate the classroom with you.

15 Allow students to bring in the music they like and let the class listen to it at any good opportunity.

16 On a weekly basis, have students present the problems

they are having in school (academic, social, even neighborhood and family). This creates a family atmosphere in the class and it helps students feel more sympathetic toward each other's moods, feelings, and behavior.

17 If you have bilingual students, put up labels of classroom objects in the students' native languages.

18 Adapt show and tell or sharing time to older grades.

19 Have a daily calendar where children share news from home to be written on the chalkboard.

20 Organize occasional field trips in the neighborhood that are purely social, not "educational."

THE CORE OF INTERCULTURAL EDUCATION:

WEAVING CULTURE INTO THE CURRICULUM

It seems to me in a school that's ebony
African history should be pumped up steadily,
But it's not....
Teaching kids what needs to be taught
Cause black and white kids both take the shorts
When one doesn't know about the other's culture
Ignorance swoops down like a vulture
—Lyrics from rap song, "You Must Learn" by KRS-1

For most of us, multicultural education has come to mean putting together a special unit or celebration that depicts the cultural heritage of our students. These are often taught in conjunction with special holidays.

We believe that multicultural education should also be an everyday thing, something that is woven into every lesson that we teach. This approach raises many questions, which we have been working through collectively.

Why should multiculturalism be incorporated into every subject?

It helps to bridge a gap between home and school. It makes use of what is familiar to students to teach them about the unfamiliar. It motivates and inspires them. And it also allows them to have input into what is taught in the classroom, which makes learning more interactive and therefore more meaningful.

I have many cultures represented in my classroom. How am I supposed to become an expert on each?

The experts are in front of you. The trick is to learn to utilize the expertise that is already in the classroom.

So how do you utilize the students as resources?

You do it by encouraging students to share as much as possible their everyday, lived experiences, and/or the knowledge that they have gained from family members in the course of any given lesson.

EXAMPLE

Introducing a story about a snowstorm, you ask your second-grade students if it snows everywhere in the world, what was it like for some of them the first time they saw snow, what the difference is in housing and clothing in countries where there is no snow.

EXAMPLE

For a sixth grade class preparing to write about summer vacations, do some pre-writing discussion comparing and contrasting lifestyles in the places where their parents grew up and where they now live. You know from past experience that many students spend summers with family in places where their parents grew up.

EXAMPLE

To introduce a unit on poetry, begin with the lyrics of rap.

EXAMPLE

Use rap to discuss imagery, style, rhyme, metaphor, alliteration, rhythm, etc. Have students write their own rap lyrics. Then introduce other styles of poetry and have students compare and contrast.

In art class, motivate students by inviting in a working artist representative of the cultural background of some of your students to present his or her work. One teacher was inspired to do this after a student told her that there were no Spanish-speaking artists. This occurred at a time when the Goya exhibit was at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts.

It is somewhat obvious how to weave multicultural themes into language arts and social studies. But what about science and math?

In the film, *Stand and Deliver*, master teacher Jaime Escalante inspired his Chicano math students by reminding them that their ancestors, the Aztecs, were the inventors of the zero, that they, the students, had math in their blood. Similarly, we can tell our African American students about the mathematical genius of the Egyptians who were, after all, Africans. An example of how to weave African history into teaching multiplication is included below. Science is an opportunity to look at how other cultures have gone about solving the problems of human existence. The second lesson below illustrates how Egyptian methods for curing meat can be used to teach about controlling bacteria. These lessons are excerpted from the curriculum, "What Shall I Tell My Children Who Are Black?" by Arlene Hambrick, 1989.

The people of ancient Egypt found many reasons to make mathematical calculations. Each year the Nile River, which ran through the land would overflow and people would use math to redivide the land. Once the land boundaries were settled the people would grow their crops and then develop weights and measures to better bargain with. All the mathematical operations were used in Egyptian society. The one farthest away however, from how we do it today is multiplication.

This is how the Egyptians would complete their multiplication. This method is called "duplication and mediation:"

Find the product of 22 and 12:

PROBLEM

1 First, halve one factor. Continue to halve the answers until you arrive at 1. If the number is odd, subtract 1 before you halve it.

ANSWER

2 Double the other factor. Continue to double the answers until you have as many numbers as in Step 1.

Step1	**Step 2**
22	12
11	**24**
5	**48**
2	96
1	**192**

3 Find the sum of the multiples in Step 2 which correspond to the odd number in the first column (from step 1).

4 You should have your answer (24 + 48 + 192 = 264)

12 x 22 = 264

Now try the following:

PROBLEMS

A. 45 x 17 = ?

B. 136 x 25 = ?

ANSWERS

A. *45 x 17 = 765*

45	17
22	34
11	68
5	136
2	272
1	544

B. *136 x 25= 3400*

136	25
68	50
34	100
17	200
8	400
4	800
2	1600
1	3200

During the times of the queens in Egypt, food was very often a major issue. The kings and the queens and their households were able to keep food without refrigeration because of the drying and curing process. Ancient Egyptians used this process to slow down or retard the growth of bacteria in their foods. So they cured their foods by removing the water and moistures out of the food, thereby also removing the mechanisms for the growth of microorganisms.

Let's take a look at this process. What we want to do is learn how to preserve fresh meat. We can best do this by removing as much water as possible from the meat.

Materials and equipment that you will need to gather:
- 1 pound steak
- a sharp knife
- a cutting board
- heavy bottle or a meat mallet
- salt (Kosher if possible)
- scale (dietetic or postal)
- a pan with a rack
- a string or long skewer
- the attached chart and pencil

Trim all fat from the steak. Then cut the steak (with the grain of the meat), making sure each piece is only 1 inch wide. You should be able to get 8 to 10 strips from your meat.

Lay the strips on the cutting board and pound with the mallet or the bottle until each piece of steak is thin. Divide the strips into two groups. Sprinkle salt heavily on one group. Then turn them over and pound the salt into the other side.

Now divide each group into two parts thusly:

Group 1. oven-dried, salted

Group 2. oven dried, unsalted

Group 3. air-dried, salted

Group 4. air dried, unsalted.

Weigh each strip on the scale and record the weight. Then hang the air-dried strips to dry. Place the pan with the strips to be oven-dried in a very slow oven (150 F). Leave oven door slightly open.

When the strips are sufficiently dried, weigh each strip again and calculate the percentage of weight loss using the following formula:

$$\text{percentage of weight loss} = \frac{\text{fresh weight} - \text{dried weight}}{\text{fresh weight}} \times 100$$

After the oven-dried strips cool, try breaking your strip.
Also try breaking an air-dried strip.
Which treatment gives the crispest jerky?
Which gives the toughest?
Does salt have an effect on the drying process?

Hint: Eating the jerky will give you some of the answers.

WEAVING IN CULTURE THROUGH PROVERBS

"They want us to learn English and lose our cultural backgrounds. I think there's a way they can work up on our already culture. And build it to be strong and better than what they are and we are. Two things combined can be very good. We take the Spanish culture and a little of the English culture. We can be great students, great people, great leaders of this country. Just because we're Spanish, we don't have to lose our Spanish, lose our culture to be Americans. Latin Americans are Americans too."

— Evelyn Abreu, student
English High School

One way to build on students' "already culture" is through proverbs, the traditional sayings through which every culture passes on values and advice from one generation to another.

Proverbs can be used to help students learn more about their own cultures as well as those of their classmates. Proverbs are often clever and profound. We have found that exploring the wisdom of their ancestors increases students' appreciation of their own heritage. Furthermore, through finding proverbs which are similar across cultures, or which reflect similar values, students identify ways in which their different backgrounds are, in fact, similar.

What skills can be taught through proverbs? Students can practice interviewing, note-taking, listening, and— in some cases — translating skills through the process of collecting proverbs from family members. When individual students share their proverbs with the group, the class discussion can reinforce such critical thinking skills as comparison and contrast. Proverbs can inspire activities at all levels to develop language: compositions and role-plays are two examples. They provide culturally meaningful examples of language arts skills such as metaphor, imagery, making inferences.

A word of warning is in order. Proverbs look simpler than they are. It is easy to underestimate the difficulty of decoding the wisdom buried in many a proverb. Also, many sayings do not translate easily. Therefore, work with students to keep probing until they uncover the real, often hidden meaning of each.

SUGGESTED PROCEDURE

✎ Write home a note, explaining your intent to parents and asking for their cooperation.

✎ Present and discuss the meaning of some proverbs in class. Help students to draw out the moral, or lesson, and encourage them to relate the proverbs to their own experiences. If possible, discuss the origin.

✎ Assign students to collect several proverbs from a relative. Use a form to guide the interview. For each proverb, students should ask the relative to explain the meaning, give a situ-

ation in which the proverb would be used, and ask how the relative learned the proverb.

If possible, collect, compile, and pass out all the proverbs, identifying who brought it in and the culture of origin.

Individuals can present their proverbs, or the class can read them over together, identifying meanings, similarities, and differences.

The list of proverbs can be used as the basis for writing assignments ("How have one of the proverbs proven true or false in your own life?"), dramatic improvisations (students act out a situation illustrating one of the proverbs and the rest of the class must guess which one it is), or follow-up reading assignments, such as folk tales.

We collected and discussed the following proverbs from our own cultural heritages. They may give you a place to begin with your students.

Irish Proverbs

A boy's best friend is his mother and there's no spancel stronger than her apron string. (Spancel: a rope used to fetter farm animals, especially a horse or cow).

Meaning: This proverb refers to the special bond between an Irish lad and his mother.

What's good for the goose is good for the gander.

Meaning: What's good for one is good for the other.

You'll never plow a field by turning it over in your mind.

Meaning: Actions are better than thoughts.

A trout in the pot is better than a salmon in the sea.

Meaning: A reasonable goal is better than something unattainable. (In Ireland, trouts are more easily caught in the many lakes and streams; salmon are more desirable but more difficult to catch in the sea.)

The older the fiddle, the sweeter the tune.

Meaning: with experience and age come greater knowledge and wisdom.

Puerto Rican/ Spanish Proverbs

Camerón que se duerme se lo lleva la corriente.

(The current sweeps the sleeping shrimp away).

Meaning: you need to be assertive, or you will lose out.

El hábito no hace al monje.

(The habit doesn't make the monk).

Meaning: don't be fooled by outward appearances.

El viejo malcriado hace el niño mal educado.

(The spoiled old person makes the child a brat.)

Meaning: those who bring up a child are responsible for how he or she behaves.

El que tiene tienda que la atienda, si no que la venda.

(If you have a store, take care of it; if not, sell it),

Meaning: Take care of business.

No por mucho madrugar amanece más temprano.

(Getting up at dawn won't make the sun rise earlier)

Meaning: some things cannot be rushed.

Porque los lagartijos trepan postes, no quiere decir que sean electricistas.

(Just because small lizards climb light posts, that does not mean that they are electricians).

Meaning: Don't be fooled.

Dime con quien andas y te diré quien eres.

(Tell me who you hang out with and I'll tell you who you are.)

Meaning: be careful who your friends are.

African American Proverbs

A hard head makes a soft behind.

Meaning: Stubborn, "hard-headed" children end up learning "the hard way"— by being spanked.

You know not the minute or the hour.

Meaning: Death can come at any time, therefore be prepared by living a good life here and now.

God don't like ugliness.

Meaning: Because God sees everything, you cannot get away with unkind behavior.

Don't run with the hen and hold with the hound.

Meaning: Don't gossip with this person about that person, keeping up with both sides and being loyal to neither.

Book sense don't beat common sense.

Meaning: A person with formal education has much to learn from someone else who lacks formal education but has life experience.

American/English

The early bird catches the worm.

Meaning: It pays to be early.

He travels fastest who travels alone.

Meaning: You can get things done better by yourself.

Blood is thicker than water.

Meaning: Family ties are more important than anything.

Empty barrels make the most noise

Meaning: Those who know the least talk the most.

You can't teach an old dog new tricks.

Meaning: It is difficult to get people to change.

CONSULTING THE CULTURAL EXPERTS:

STUDENT INTERVIEWING

"The ME in multicultural education is a sacred entity, one to be hallowed above all other resources. The greatest gift we can share with the other person is not our own wealth but rather the revelation to him of his own treasures."

—Leon Hymovitz

As teachers, we know that every student is different! There are some students who talk constantly and others who seldom speak at all. "Student interviewing" is an ideal method for all types of students. This technique involves everyone and allows the student to feel important as a reporter. Reading, writing, listening, note-taking, summarizing, interpersonal communication, and oral storytelling are some of the skills that are reinforced through this method. Even students who are not easily motivated or who have short attention spans benefit from interviewing — it's more effective than just reading a book or listening to a lecture because it is first-hand and requires student participation. The students enjoy learning and the interviewees enjoy reflecting and sharing.

Using students as interviewers is also a technique that can help us to embrace diversity in the school setting. When students interview each other, they can compare and contrast individual differences and cultural differences as well. It is up to the teacher to set a tone which validates rather than stigmatizes differences. Students can learn about the complexities of a diverse group if they all do the same interview and graph or chart the answers together. The interview technique can also be used to help bridge the gap between bilingual and monolingual programs.

Interviews can also allow students to understand better who they are, by exploring who and what they come from. A wonderful example of using this oral history approach with young children is *The Mango Tree*, a publication by Cambridge Public School students through with the Oral History Center (see *Resources*).

Yet another variation on the interview technique can contribute to students' feelings of belonging in the school. Even first-graders can interview school personnel about their respective jobs. The results can be compiled in a newspaper or even a handbook for the school.

We present here three prototypes of the interview technique, followed by the reactions of teachers who tried out each one. The third prototype is an interesting variation: teachers interview students. We present some of the enlightening things which we learned from this experience.

PROTOTYPE #1: STUDENT-TO-STUDENT INTERVIEW

GOALS:

- ✓ To practice the interviewing process
- ✓ To build relations within a class or a school
- ✓ To learn to relate to others in similar situations
- ✓ To reinforce writing, listening, note-taking, and summarizing skills

ACTIVITIES:

- ✓ Teacher gives out guide questions (or the class can brainstorm questions together)
- ✓ Students role-play the interview process
- ✓ The class divides into groups and interviews students from another class (or each other)
- ✓ Students compare answers, and draw conclusions about similarities and differences in a class discussion.

EXAMPLE:

Using this technique, monolingual program children interviewed students in a bilingual class, several grades higher. The students who interviewed older bilingual students felt shy at first, but soon became engrossed in learning about what it is like to be bilingual and from another country. The bilingual students felt valued and important. It was a personal way for older children to advise younger children. The following guide questions were used in this activity:

— What languages do you speak?

— How did you learn your language?

— What country are you from?

— What is it like in your country?

— What do people eat /wear/how do people live there?

— Do you miss your country? Why, why not?

— If you could bring anything from your country/culture to the U.S., what would it be?

— How long have you been in the U.S.?

PROTOTYPE #2: STUDENT-TO-PARENT OR OTHER ADULT IN THE COMMUNITY

GOALS:

- ✓ To avoid stereotypes
- ✓ To develop students' pride in their culture
- ✓ To teach students about their roots by helping them to learn about their cultural traditions
- ✓ To learn respect for their own culture in order to understand and respect other cultures

- ✓ Provide a list of questions (see below)
- ✓ Send home a note explaining the purpose of the project, requesting parental cooperation
- ✓ Assign students to interview parents or grandparents

Students from a bilingual class did a project around "Conociendo tus raices/ Knowing your roots". They formulated a questionnaire with which they interviewed their parents. It was titled "Who am I?" and included the following questions (which were asked in Spanish):

— In your day, what were schools like?

— In what language, or languages?

— What games did you play when you were little?

— What music did you listen to?

— What foods did you eat?

— What were the rules that your parents had for you?

— How did they wash, iron, and cook?

— If you could, would you return to those times? Why?

The students enjoyed the interviewing process and were anxious to learn more about their families and background. Through this project, they appreciated more their parents, grandparents, and culture, and understood better why their families came to the U.S. Parents and grandparents reflected on family history, and students were able to understand similarities and differences between the generations. Students were better able to answer questions for themselves about who they are.

ACTIVITIES:

PROTOTYPE #3: TEACHER -TO-STUDENT

- ✓ To learn folklore and traditions that students know
- ✓ To understand the background knowledge of students
- ✓ To validate the home culture within the school context

GOALS:

- ✓ In the context of a group discussion, teacher asks students questions about songs, games, and other aspects of their folkloric tradition
- ✓ Teacher asks children to demonstrate and writes down responses
- ✓ Teacher and students learn to perform the games, songs

ACTIVITIES:

The exercise of teachers interviewing students individually is discussed next. However, the idea of teachers interviewing students in the context of a group discussion was included in this

EXAMPLE:

section because it is another way that the interview technique can bring students' home cultures into the curriculum. A kindergarden teacher who developed this activity concluded: "The children enjoy sharing ideas from their family life. It helps the teacher understand their backgrounds and also helps them to become aware of the extent to which parents do or do not take the time to share their traditions with their children. "This was a nice way for teacher and students to relate to each other and to see how traditions are passed on from generation to generation." Another way to interview students is to do so on an individual basis, or in small groups. The following section illustrates this approach.

HAVE YOU EVER INTERVIEWED YOUR STUDENTS?

"If you want to rescue someone who's lost in the woods, first you have to find out where they are."

— Jonathan Holt

Jonathan Holt's suggestion guided us in trying to learn more about our students. To find out more about "where they are," we interviewed some of our students, singly or in small groups. Our interview technique was borrowed from the field of anthropology, which uses ethnographic interviews to learn from participants in a culture in order to get an insider's perspective on how the culture functions. Our aim was to get a snapshot of our classroom from the other side of the teacher's desk.

OUR QUESTIONS

- Where were you born?
- Did you go to school there? Tell me about it.
- What do you miss most about your life (or school) there?
- What do you like best about living here?
- What about going to school here?
- What is your favorite class?
- What is the worst part of your day at school?
- If you were the principal, what would you do to make this school better?
- Is it hard to make friends with kids from different backgrounds?
- If you could go to a school where the students were all from your background, would you? Why or why not?
- If you woke up tomorrow with blond hair and blue eyes (or black skin, or speaking another language), how would your life be different?
- Your own question....

WHAT WE LEARNED

We learned a lot! Here are some of the things each of us learned from sitting down with one or two students, and getting them to talk about their realities, using the guide questions.

"You found out how they perceived school, some of the problems they were having, which I wasn't aware of. After they told me about these problems, I tried to avoid those kinds of pitfalls in my teaching."

"Aside from the value of just sitting down with a kid and talking about their culture — I remember being surprised at how most kids have similar likes and dislikes. For example, the things that the kids who were born outside the country liked the most here were the toys."

"And also it was important to learn that most kids are proud

of their heritage and wouldn't change it. But they want other people to understand it. One other thing that I thought was important — even though it can create problems: kids would rather go to school in a multicultural, multiethnic, multiracial environment than one with kids from just their own background."

"It was kind of interesting to find out some of the problems that these kids face when they come over — things that we take for granted. So I think the more we're in a multicultural environment, we need to be aware of the differences. We make a lot of assumptions.

"Doing these interviews made me more aware of my culture, my black culture. And I think it gave me another reason to want to know more about black culture for its own sake, not just as a defense against the white world. "Doing these interviews with colleagues too has helped me to understand cultural differences."

"Interviewing students gives you a means to get to know them better on a personal basis. We tend to know students in a very fragmented way, without always understanding them in a holistic way. Doing these interviews helps you understand the whole child, which can be very useful in figuring out what motivates them."

"It gave me an opportunity to speak one on one. I pinpointed kids who normally hide away and don't speak up or participate. When the little girl I interviewed said she wanted to be half Palestinian and half American, I understood her much more. It opened up the door for me to ask other questions and to understand her so much better."

"The interview reinforced my values and helped me to appreciate individuals. We are learning, but it's informal. It builds trust. And sometimes things that we can't do in a formal class setting, we can get in an interview.

"Doing an interview, we learn about the student and the student learns about us. It's a kind of learning without an upper limit. You can keep going and going. I think it would be an especially useful technique to use with kids who have behavior problems."

"What surprised me was that I always had the idea that schools in Puerto Rico were better, based on my own experiences there. But it seems that the experiences of these two students I interviewed were not as positive as mine. So now I don't take it for granted that every student who comes had a great experience. I discovered that what they like are the materials and the variety here. Puerto Rico is still a third world country."

"What surprised me when I asked my student why he likes being in this country, he replied that it was the opportunity to work and to make money. And the cold weather. I was surprised at how positive the student's attitudes were. Doing the interview helps you to work more one to one with the students.

Based on our experiences, these are our suggestions for doing a successful interview with one or more of your students:

✔ Make sure the atmosphere is non-threatening. Try to make the student feel comfortable and let them know you won't be making any judgements concerning them or their culture. To put the child at ease, you can add some of your own experiences.

✔ Do the interview in a room where no one else is around to eliminate tension.

✔ Allow yourself enough time.

✔ Stay pleasant!

✔ You can choose a present student or one that you had in years past.

✔ Use a tape recorder or take notes.

✔ Before beginning with the guide questions, ask a few questions like "How was your week-end" or "What are your favorite toys." Make sure to give the student time to relax and answer.

TRY IT!

INTERVIEWING TIPS:

MAKING THE MOST OF YOUR MULTICULTURAL CLASS:

COOPERATIVE LEARNING TECHNIQUES

The rationale for cooperative learning is that the teacher, acting as facilitator, can enable the group to take an active role in the learning process. The teacher is neither the center of attention nor the primary source of instruction for students.

Within a cooperative learning format, students learn from each other through cooperation, consensus, and mutual support. Cooperative learning works because students learn more when they verbalize what they are learning. Cooperative learning stimulates language development. There is equal status among students involved in the process. There is more contact between students, and they all have a common goal. It gives the students a sense of achievement and helps them to develop skills needed later on in life. One of these is the ability to work in a team environment which is the atmosphere of the typical workplace.

Research reveals that the use of cooperative learning techniques can have the following desirable outcomes:

1 A decrease in "progressive racism" by which school children become further and further polarized by race and ethnic groups as they get older. Cooperative learning breaks down these barriers most effectively. It is a technique that can help teachers maneuver children into groups that are racially and culturally balanced so that children become more accustomed to working together because they share a common goal.

2 An increase in students' self-esteem and higher achievement (especially that of minority students). Students feel more in control of the learning process and time on task is often increased as a result. Cooperative learning fosters cooperative behavior and an improved positive attitude toward peers, school, schoolwork, and teachers.

The following are some of the cooperative learning lessons tried by teachers in our group.

VOCABULARY PARTNERS

GRADE LEVEL: 4th grade

CONTENT AREA: Reading

MATERIALS: Lesson vocabulary words from HBJ story.

TIME: 15-20 minutes a day for 3 days.

GOALS:

—To have children learn to spell, define, and use words in a sentence.

—To allow children of different races, cultures, and sexes to have an opportunity to interact with each other in a cooperative learning situation.

ACTIVITY: Children were assigned a learning partner by the teacher. Learning partners were mixed along racial, cultural, and gender lines. They were given no other instructions and used the fifteen minutes in reading class for three days. They spent their time learning the spelling definitions and using the words in a good

sentence. Some partners assigned homework to their partners.

EVALUATION: The bilingual children seemed to benefit most. This was probably due to the fact that vocabulary is most difficult for these children. All of the children really enjoyed the activity. It provided an opportunity to share in the learning experience to a greater degree.

HOMEWORK CHECKERS

GRADE LEVEL: 4th grade.

CONTENT AREA: Math.

MATERIALS: Math homework problems.

TIME: 45 minute math class.

GOALS:

— To have children correct their homework assignments in math.

— To have children come to an agreement on the correct answer when there is a difference in their answers on an assignment.

ACTIVITY: The children were divided into groups of two's. Homework assignments were returned to them. They were told to compare their assignments. They were instructed to discuss problems that they had not answered similarly. They were to check and correct their papers and circle any problem they had corrected. The group was to add the reason they had decided to change an answer. Each person in the pair was to make certain both answers agreed, then staple the papers together. These were then graded as an individual grade and each member of the pair was given that grade.

EVALUATION: The students worked very well. They especially liked the fact that they were being given an opportunity to correct any mistakes they had made before getting a grade for their assignment. This was a good and effective way to help children who were having difficulty.

REPORT GROUPS

GRADE LEVEL: 5th grade.

CONTENT AREA: Science, language arts, social studies (current events).

MATERIALS: Health Science textbook; "Planet Earth," Milliken Publishing Company Reproducible Pages; Boston Globe; Boston Herald; New York Post (multiple copies of each newspaper); paper; pencils.

TIME: Two 45 minute class periods.

GOALS:

— To identify the causes of earthquakes

— To understand terms: plates, faults, crust, core, mantle, continental drift.

— To identify the five "w's" of a newspaper article: who, what, where,

when, and why.

ACTIVITY: The day after the San Francisco earthquake, I brought in multiple copies of the daily newspapers (listed above). The children were divided into 3 groups. Each group was given one type of newspaper. The groups were instructed to read the stories about the earthquake and write a brief report (outline) to answer the questions: who, what, where, when, and why. Individuals within each group were assigned roles: writer, timekeeper, process observer, and reporter.

The small group, cooperative learning activity was followed up on the following day with a 45 minute, large group, teacher-directed activity. The science textbook as well as commercial ditto masters were used to teach the students more specifics about the causes of earthquakes.

EVALUATION: This was a fun way to introduce the science concepts while also giving the students a specific purpose for reading the newspaper. The children asked many questions, and were encouraged to generate their own hypotheses instead of being given the "right answers" by the teacher. I made a chart on the board to record each group's results. The groups then discussed how well things went and identified any problems that occurred. Group grades were given based on the groups' effort and participation.

The students unanimously voted to do more cooperative learning activities. It appeared that everyone benefited from the experience. Students who were more independent and task-oriented were forced to listen to others' ideas, compromise, and reach consensus of opinion in order to complete the task. Students who were slower learners or less confident in their reading and writing skills were able to contribute to the groups in other positive ways. They also seemed to benefit from receiving help from their peers. Interestingly, it seemed to be these slower learners who more eagerly risked giving their opinions, while the more academically-oriented students tended to be more cautious.

PROCESS WRITING A BOOK REVIEW

GRADE LEVEL: 5th grade

CONTENT AREA: Language arts

MATERIALS: Paper; pencils; *Among Schoolchildren*, by Tracy Kidder; crayons; markers; drawing paper.

TIME 60 minutes.

GOALS

— To increase students' listening appreciation of high-interest, nonfiction reading material written above the grade level of the students.

— To develop students' literal, interpretive, and evaluative comprehension skills: ability to recall details; predict outcomes; make comparisons/ contrasts based on personal experiences; identify cause and effect; identify conflict (internal and external); and discuss

characterization.

ACTIVITY: Since the beginning of the school year, I have been reading Tracy Kidder's *Among Schoolchildren* on a daily basis for 15 minute periods of "read aloud" time.

After finishing the first chapter, students were divided into 3 groups. Each group was instructed to write a book review including their reactions to the book so far and predictions about what might happen next. As an optional activity, students could also draw pictures to illustrate their book reviews.

EVALUATION: The children really enjoyed this activity! They eagerly recalled details from the story, and made comparisons/ contrasts between the fifth graders in Ms. Zajac's room 205, Holyoke, Mass., and themselves as fifth graders in Ms. Bartley's room 205, Boston, Mass.

The groups seemed to have the most fun sharing their book reviews and illustrations with each other. The first step, the actual group writing of the book reviews, seemed to be more difficult. Many children wanted to get their own ideas into the papers. Initially, it was difficult for some students to listen to others and work cooperatively without one or more students trying to dominate.

For this activity, roles were not assigned by the teacher. The students themselves had to decide who would assume the roles of writer, reporter, timekeeper, and group process observer for each group.

As the teacher observing this activity, it was difficult to sit still without intervening during particular times when groups became stuck in the process (i.e. not allocating time well; allowing particular students to dominate while others remained relatively inactive; and having difficulty in compromising and assigning roles to group members).

This activity was definitely worthwhile. Each group stayed with the task until it was completed. The students even asked if they could do the same activity again after completing subsequent chapters.

ESSAY TEST USING COOPERATIVE LEARNING GROUP FORMAT

GRADE LEVEL: 5th grade

CONTENT AREA: Social studies

MATERIALS: Pencils, paper, Heath social studies text, *The United States Past to Present.*

TIME SPENT: 45 minutes

GOALS: To evaluate students' understanding of major concepts in chapter 3, "England's First Colonies": charter, profit, joint-stock companies, the colonies of Roanoke, Jamestown, and Plymouth, Pilgrims, Puritans, Catholics. The students should understand that by 1650, England had 3 colonies in North America: Virginia, Massachusetts, and Maryland.

ACTIVITY: Students were divided into 3 groups (each group containing 5 students). The students were instructed that they would have 45 minutes in which to select a writer, timekeeper, process observer, and reporter for each group, and then answer the following essay question in 2-3 paragraphs:

"By 1650, England had 3 colonies in North America. Name these 3 colonies and describe how they were established. (Hint: Who were the leaders? Why were the colonies established?)"

When dividing students into groups of 3 in order to take the group essay test, students were assigned to groups randomly. Specifically, students called out the numbers 1-2-3 in order around the room. All of the ones went to one table, the two's to another, the threes to another. In this way, there could be no complaining about "all the smart kids" picking each other to be in one group.

EVALUATION: The students were happy to take the test in a group, as opposed to individually. They seemed to have more confidence that the group grade given to each individual student would be higher than the grade that students would receive if the test had been taken individually.

While the essays written by each group were fair, I was somewhat apprehensive about giving the same group grade to individual students. I had observed that some students contributed to the group very little, while others appeared to really understand the concepts being tested.

If I were to repeat this activity, I would give the group test first. Later, I would give the students a second test (multiple choice, fill-in-the-blanks, true/false) to be taken individually. In this way, I would be able to average the results of both the group and individual tests to come out with a grade more reflective of individual students' mastery of the subject.

This solution was presented to the students, most of whom agreed. The only students who objected to being given an individual test following the group test were those who clearly had not really studied enough to make any significant contribution to the group essay test either. These were the students who appeared to let others "do all the work" as observed by their peers as well.

MATH GROUPS

GRADE LEVEL: 5th grade

CONTENT AREA: Math

MATERIALS: Paper , pencils, play money, blackboard

TIME: 45 minutes –1 hour

GOALS:

— To develop/reinforce math skills with money

— To increase social skills within a group

ACTIVITY: Divide the class into groups of three. Assign students to each pick a role: cashier, patron, and recorder. Give each patron

$5 in play money, with instructions to choose items from a menu listed on a worksheet, with prices. The recorder records prices, and the cashier adds them up. The group picks someone to put the data on the blackboard.

EVALUATION: The students' comments were overwhelmingly positive. It worked best for the slow learner. With a large class (34 students) I found it difficult because it was time consuming. You must set a time limit.

SCIENCE REPORT GROUPS

GRADE LEVEL: Second grade bilingual

CONTENT AREA: Science

MATERIALS: Books, pictures

TIME: 45 minutes

GOALS:

— To collaborate

— To develop self-esteem

— To develop listening skills

— To develop speaking skills

— To give the teacher an opportunity to observe how students with low and high skills cooperated

ACTIVITY: Divide the class into groups and assign each group a topic in the unit covered in the science book. Select a leader, checker, recorder, and timekeeper in each group. Assign the group to go through the material and summarize it.

EVALUATION: The students ran the class, not the teacher. Some of the low-achieving students were successful leaders. Each group tried to do its best. Students developed social skills. They commented that they felt proud and happy in their assigned roles. The one problem was the level of noise.

LEARNING PARTNERS

GRADE LEVEL: Primary ESL class (8 students)

CONTENT AREA: Language arts

MATERIALS: 12-15 classroom objects: stapler, tape, etc.

TIME: 30 minutes

GOALS:

— To learn names of classroom items

— To promote cooperation

— To increase the amount of natural, spontaneous English students speak in class, with less teacher direction

ACTIVITY: The 8 children were divided into groups of four at separate tables. On each table were placed 6 or 7 classroom items, with instructions that children were to learn the names for all of them. One student was tester, one checked off what each one knew, one was timekeeper, and one had to report to the teacher. The

teacher developed a graph to check off the words as children learned them.

EVALUATION: The children spoke much, much more English than usual, and not just related to naming the objects. It raised the question of too much pressure on the students who knew less English or were slower learners. One approach would be to structure groups so as to avoid pairing the really aggressive kids with the slower learners.

DRILL PARTNERS

GRADE LEVEL: 2nd, 3rd grade bilingual

CONTENT AREA: Math

MATERIALS: Multiplication tables worksheets

TIME: 50 minutes

GOALS:

— To reinforce multiplication fact

— To have the students who already knew their tables help the ones who were having difficulties

ACTIVITY: Students were divided into groups of four and instructed to practice the multiplication tables. Those who already knew the tables had to help those who did not. The children were also told that they would have an oral test on the multiplication tables and that they would receive a group grade.

EVALUATION: The students who benefited the most from this exercise were those who were doing the most poorly learning multiplication facts on their own. Those who knew them didn't seem to benefit. In the future I will grade them for their behavior, because when I put them into groups they wanted to play.

COMPOSITION GROUPS

GRADE LEVEL: Middle school learning disabled class

CONTENT AREA: Language arts

MATERIALS: Pens, pencils, computer (optional)

TIME: 60 minutes

GOALS: To build students' confidence in their writing skills

ACTIVITIES: The class was divided into 3 teams. Each was responsible for writing a story. Different tasks were assigned to individual group members, such as dictionary person, proof-reader, writer, idea person, and task master. Each group was to produce a story and read the finished product to the class.

EVALUATION: The teams got so into this that they gave more than I initially wanted. They turned their story into a play and then decided to produce it, costumes and all. We eventually videotaped the productions. They were excited and so was I. I never thought I would get L.D. students to willingly write anything. They loved it.

PROBLEM SOLVERS

GRADE LEVEL: 5th grade, advanced work class

CONTENT AREA: Math

MATERIALS: Math textbook

TIME SPENT: 45 minutes

GOALS

— To promote group skills

— To increase math problem-solving skills

ACTIVITY: Children were divided into small groups and given problems to solve. Each student had to contribute part of the solution. Groups could decide how to divide the tasks, but they had to show where all members contributed. Each student had to be able to explain how the group solved the problem.

EVALUATION: Students enjoyed working in small groups and helped each other to solve the problems. They commented that they wanted to work this way more often. This technique seemed to benefit all students, particularly the slower learners.

FAIRY TALE READING GROUPS

GRADE LEVEL: 1st grade

CONTENT AREA: Reading

MATERIALS: Fairy tales, paper, pencils

TIME: 30 minutes

GOALS: To improve critical thinking skills

ACTIVITY: The teacher read the fairy tale "The Gingerbread Boy" and then asked the class what could the gingerbread boy have done to get across the river instead of getting on the fox. Students were divided into groups of 3 and assigned to come up with five ideas, select the best, and present it to the class. They were asked to explain why they picked the solution they chose, and the reasons they did not select the other 4 ideas.

EVALUATION: The children were excited about sharing their ideas. It seemed to work best for those who seldom participate.

CELEBRATING DIVERSITY IN YOUR CLASSROOM:

IDEAS THAT ARE TRIED AND TRUE

Over the years, we have developed a variety of strategies, both simple and more involved, to make our classrooms places where diversity is not just tolerated, but embraced and celebrated. We try to draw on the diversity of our students' backgrounds in order to broaden the educational horizens of all our students.

The following ideas have been implemented in slightly different ways by many of us, as the commentaries suggest.

When a new student from another country arrives in your class, take the opportunity to introduce the class to a new country.

"When I get children from another state or country new in my class, we talk about where they came from, what it is like to live there, and what language they speak. If the child speaks another language, I try to include discussion about the child's other language so that my students will see the value of speaking more than one language."

"I have my students who are from other countries share where their native lands are located, their languages, music, writing systems, etc. That way the new student will feel proud to share his or her background."

"I encourage my class to get to know the new students, and I try to get one student in particular to make friends with him or her, asking questions such as 'Do you miss your native country?' This student then introduces the new student to his or her classmates."

Help students to see the similarities and differences among themselves in a positive light.

"I play a game with my students called similarities and differences. I separate the class into two groups, choosing one student from each group to observe a similarity and difference among students on the two teams. Each team receives a point for each correct observation."

"We discuss this in conjunction with the HBJ reading skills of comparing and contrasting."

Make sure that the seating plan in your class is integrated.

"Students should be grouped in ethnically diverse groups. My students sit in cooperative learning groups of six. The students from different countries are distributed among the six tables."

"I usually group my desks in sets of four according to math scores. I do this because if I used reading scores, I'd have lots of students of the same ethnic group. Sometimes I group students in alphabetical order, which is usually neutral, or I number the seats and have students pick a number."

Present students with books and films which depict positive cultural images. (See Resources)

"My first graders read and report on 50 to 100 books. I determine a list of countries to be "visited" ahead of time. When the program begins, I take a world map and set of tacks which have children's names attached to them. After reading five books, the student "moves" to the next country. As each country is visited, I plan a lesson around it. We call this Reading Around the World."

"Books and movies about students' own cultural backgrounds promote self-esteem. Students feel proud of their cultures and say, "I am proud to be someone special."

"It is also important to use films and videos to give children some exposure to people and cultures which are unknown to them."

Give students an opportunity to discuss their own culture, especially at holiday time.

"My students write about their own backgrounds and read their writings to their peers."

"To put the students at ease, the teacher should first present his or her own cultural background. This encourages students and gives them a guideline as to the information they can present to others."

"In our school, we celebrated Harvest and Halloween. Kwanza was celebrated with Christmas. I interviewed children in my class to see how and what holidays they celebrated."

"I have the parents of my students list the important holidays."

"We celebrated Kwanza one year with a class from another middle school, but it is easier to share with other classes in my building. This year we had four classes come together and present a Kwanza program. We also shared a Kwanza rap. The Jewish kids shared Hannukah with the class, the Blacks shared Kwanza, and the Hispanic kids shared the celebration of the Three Kings."

Food is an important part of cultural identity and an entry into other cultures.

"The Boston Public Schools cafeteria doesn't represent all the ethnic groups. If we can incorporate ethnic foods even once a month, this would promote a greater appreciation and respect for other ethnic groups."

"My students learn about cultural foods from their classmates."

"A great schoolwide project we tried is to write a multicultural cookbook — then have a pot-luck supper with various ethnic foods."

"At the beginning of the school year, we decide which holidays will be monocultural or multicultural, and whether we will cele-

brate them with snacks and sweets or a total meal. For each holiday that comes up, we plan a meal or a food festival."

Bring the bilingual and the monolingual classes together through a variety of activities.

"It works very well to have students from the upper grades tutor the bilingual primary grade students in reading English. Just reading books has a very beneficial effect on both groups."

"Sports is a great way to integrate students from the two programs."

"The bilingual and monolingual program classes take field trips together at my school."

"In our school, we have a foreign exchange program within the building."

HOW WOULD YOU HANDLE THESE SITUATIONS?

As teachers, we also function as professionals outside our classrooms, within the community of the school. If we are committed to building institutions which are truly multicultural, respectful of the diverse backgrounds of students and teachers, we need to develop appropriate responses to inappropriate expressions of intolerance among our colleagues.

Here are some real situations which occurred in real schools. How would you handle them?

- You are sitting around the teacher's table with three colleagues, having a general conversation, just shooting the breeze. You describe a recent shopping trip where you were able to find good bargains. One of the other teachers turns to you and says, "You are one cheap Black Jew, always shopping for a bargain."

WHAT DO YOU SAY?

- You're walking by a classroom, and you overhear a colleague raise her voice with a student in frustration and say in a mocking tone, "Don't you know English? Because if you don't, I'll get you some ESL instruction."

DO YOU INTERVENE?

- Every year a teacher decorates her classroom door with a black Santa Claus. This year, a colleague passes by the room, gets very upset over seeing this black Santa and tells the classroom teacher to "take it down because there is no _____ thing as a black Santa Claus".

WHAT DO YOU SAY?

- You are sitting in your class when you hear your next door neighbor talking very loud. You move toward your door to see if there is a problem. Your neighbor is fussing at a student for being late for class. "I don't even know why you bother to come to school. You are not going to learn anything anyway. Besides you'll only stay here long enough to get pregnant, go on welfare and then leave. I'm just wasting my time with you."

HOW DO YOU RESPOND TO THIS SITUATION?

- A teacher approaches you and a friend of yours as you are going into the teachers' lunchroom with, "Do you want to hear a joke?" Your friend asks, "What's the joke about?" "Oh, about this gay guy," the other teacher goes on.

DO YOU LISTEN TO THE JOKE?

MONOLINGUAL TEACHERS OF BILINGUAL STUDENTS:

STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS

Recent research by Virginia Collier concluded that it takes five to seven years for the average linguistic minority child to learn to perform on grade level in English.[1] This is also true for many children who are born here but have as their mother tongue a language other than English. Because most students are not allowed to remain in bilingual programs for a full seven years, it is necessary for many classroom teachers outside the bilingual program to provide appropriate activities for their students of limited English proficiency. What is particularly challenging is to make sure that these students do not feel stigmatized by being assigned work that is consistently different from that of their classmates.

The following list of suggestions has been developed by Virginia Vogel Zanger. Because linguistic minority students face linguistic challenges, social challenges, and cultural challenges when they leave their bilingual classrooms, the list has been divided into language strategies, social strategies, and cultural strategies.

LANGUAGE STRATEGIES

- Before presenting a lesson, put yourself in the shoes of students new to our language and culture. Make explicit the background information, key vocabulary, and cultural assumptions that the student will need to know in order to understand. Teach that vocabulary in context, not in isolated lists, and group together related words.
- Use a multi-sensory approach wherever possible: manipulatives, visuals, role-plays, charts, maps, nonverbal cues, etc.
- To make yourself clear, rephrase, instead of repeating or talking louder. Monitor your own language, eliminating idiomatic expressions and complicated verb tenses as much as possible until the child's English is more developed.
- Continually reassess your students' language and comprehension so that you can respond appropriately.
- Accept and encourage all efforts at communication. In general, do not correct; respond to meaning, not to form. Content is primary, form will follow. Remember how babies learn their first language so effectively: through encouragement and modeling.
- Encourage children to use their stronger language to learn concepts. Allow students from similar language backgrounds to work together if it helps them clarify what you are trying to teach. Encourage parents to strengthen the first language. It is far easier to build on a strong foundation that a weak one.
- Minimize the use of time spent on "teacher talk" and maximize chances for students to use and develop their new language in different contexts.

[1] Virginia Collier. "The Age and Rate of Acquisition of Second Language for Academic Purposes." In *TESOL Quarterly*, volume 21, 1987, pp. 617-641.

If your students are also in an ESL program, work with the ESL teacher to coordinate your curricula wherever possible and to share insights about individual students.

SOCIAL STRATEGIES:

Incorporate cooperative learning techniques. For limited English speakers, they provide an opportunity to communicate with peers in meaningful interactions, thus developing second language skills and reducing social isolation. Make sure to structure it so that all members of the group must participate. Assigning appropriate roles to group members helps ensure participation from all.

Standard cooperative learning activities may need to be adapted for groups which include limited English speakers. For example, if you use a reward system based on group scores, figure out a handicapping system so that the limited English-speakers are not resented by the group. Structure small-group activities that draw on the strengths of linguistic minority students. It can be demoralizing to always be in the position of being helped.

Use a buddy system for new arrivals. Peer tutoring is another option. Make it a privilege to help out.

Look for opportunities to raise the social status of your linguistic minority students. Get to know them personally, so that you will know how to get them to share their strengths with the class, including the wealth of their experiences in two (or more) cultures and languages.

CULTURAL STRATEGIES:

Model the cultural proficiencies you expect your class to develop:

— Learn from your students about their cultures. Be respectful — the rest of the class will learn from your example. Be especially sensitive: many of the political and economic refugees may have painful pasts and current immigration problems.

— Share the wealth of your own cultural roots. Talk about specific ways in which your family has retained its ethnic heritage, as well as what was lost.

Structure the curriculum so that students can learn from each other about cultural similarities and differences. Work to reduce stereotyping and ethnocentrism by teaching students to discuss differences in a non-judgmental way. Remember the ME in multicultural education.

Involve parents in sharing their culture with your class. Remember — food is just the beginning!

- Provide all students with the opportunity to explore their own cultural backgrounds. Assign individual or joint projects which use oral history techniques such as interviews with family and community members, as well as traditional library research methods.

- Relate whatever you are teaching to the cultural backgrounds and real life experiences of your students, if possible. Search for culturally relevant materials, and make sure that your walls reflect the backgrounds of your students. Above all, use the students themselves as resources. This approach expands the cultural horizons of everyone in the class.

- Collaborate with bilingual classes and staff members to explore cultural similarities and differences.

- Establish a "sister class" relationship with a class in another country. If possible, choose a country from which one or more of your students come. Writing to pen pals is only possible activity; also consider sending class projects such as a newspaper or culture capsule.

HELPFUL SUGGESTIONS FROM OTHERS:

SUCCESSFUL TEACHING STRATEGIES FOR BLACK CHILDREN

"Black children will be themselves wherever they are and they are unique. Basically, black children are very proud of themselves....and they want to be somebody... and if they find out that you want them to be somebody they will really blossom..."

— Gloria Ladson-Billings[1]

The teacher who spoke these words was a participant in a study which identified some of the characteristics of successful teachers of black students. The teachers in the study were themselves both black and white. Gloria Ladson-Billings, an African-American professor at Santa Clara University, presented the study findings at the Annual Meeting of the American Education Research Association which was held in Boston this year. Based on interviews and classroom observations, the study concluded that successful teachers of black students shared certain things in common:

- ✓ They love teaching.
- ✓ They see themselves as part of the community.
- ✓ They view the content of the curriculum with a critical eye, are passionate about what they teach, and help students develop prerequisite knowledge and skills.
- ✓ They promote equitable teacher-student relationships with interactions which extend beyond the classroom, develop a community of learners as a high priority and encourage students to learn collaboratively.
- ✓ They believe all children can succeed.
- ✓ They recognize the intellectual, emotional, social and cultural strengths of black children.
- ✓ They make use of every available moment for instruction.
- ✓ Their classrooms are dynamic and spontaneous and, above all, participatory.
- ✓ Subject matter in their classrooms is regularly tied to student experiences and lives.
- ✓ They are not afraid to use unconventional methods to help students succeed.
- ✓ They engage in "culturally relevant" teaching, using students' culture to help students create meaning and understand the world. Thus, more than just academic success, students are pushed toward social and cultural success.

[1]From "Making a Little Magic: Teachers Talk about Successful Teaching Strategies for Black Children," paper presented by Gloria Ladson-Billings at the Annual Meeting of the American Education Research Association, 1990, Boston, Mass.

A FEW WORDS FROM VIETNAMESE PARENTS

HOW DO VIETNAMESE PARENTS SHOW CONCERN ABOUT THEIR CHILDREN'S EDUCATION?

Several years ago, parents on the Vietnamese PAC (Parent Advisory Council) of the Boston Public Schools prepared some information for educators about how their culture defines the role of parents with respect to their children's education. We include it here in its entirety, because we found it helped us to better understand Vietnamese values and thus, our Vietnamese students.

Parents give respect to school administrators and teachers.

There is a proverb in Vietnam: "muốn sang thí bắc cầu kiều, muốn con hay chữ thí yêu mến thầy" (If you want to cross the river you build the bridge; i.e., if you want your children to be educated you should love and respect their teachers.) Parents also teach children respect for their teachers. Respect for teachers and administrators comes very naturally to Vietnamese students because the first thing they are taught in school is the proverb: "Tiên học lê;hậu học văn" (First you learn respect, then you learn letters.) Teachers become the second parents of the students. Therefore, teachers have to be professional as well as of high moral standards. Teachers will be the mirror for students in their lives. In Vietnam, school is the second family of children, the school gives the students not only academic education but moral standards, too.

Parents sometimes use beatings to educate their children.

To give a child the stick on his or her buttock is commonly acceptable in Vietnam for educational purposes. In many cases, parents agree to let the teachers do so for their children. People easily accept these habits, and they are not considered child abuse, except if the parent beats a child when he or she is drunk, or if it is the stepmother.

Parents' involvement in the public education of their children.

Vietnamese parents believe that education determines their children's future and see the school as an effective agent for preparing their children for life. However, Vietnamese parents' attitude toward parental involvement in public education appears passive to most American teachers and administrators. Very few parents join the Parent Advisory Council and even fewer participate in school activities. They are often reluctant to voice their concerns and discuss educational issues with teachers and administrators.

Here in Massachusetts, three factors are thought to account for these attitudes. First, many Vietnamese parents believe that educational matters should be left to teachers and school administrators, who, in their opinion, are professionals in educational practice and management. Second, Vietnamese parents, as recent immigrants to the United States, are primarily concerned with economic survival; most parents have to work one full-time and another part-time job, some have to work on Saturday or Sunday.

Third, parents face a language barrier with English-speaking school personnel.

Parents value education.

Vietnamese parents see education as a means to prepare for life and to train a child to become a complete person, a person of knowledge and manners. They regard illiteracy as shameful. When parents talk to each other about their children, the most common topic is education: what grade levels they are in and how well they perform academically. Vietnamese esteem intellectuals. Parents, especially the educated, would like their children to become intellectual professionals. They believe that better education and higher university degrees mean better opportunities for social advancement and employment.

Education, as conceived by Vietnamese parents, means more than the acquisition of mere academic knowledge. It should also provide moral guidance. The student is supposed to be taught social propriety for proper behavior at home, school, and in the community. By proper behavior, it is understood that the child is expected to show respect for, and rational obedience to, parents, teachers, administrators, and elderly persons; to behave reasonably vis-a-vis siblings and peers; and to behave acceptably in the community. Vietnamese parents expect an all-around education for their children. Their deepest aspirations have always been to see their offspring grow up to be well-educated and of high moral standards. A good education and an elevated sense of ethics rank above all other social values and considerations.

SUGGESTIONS FOR TEACHERS OF CAMBODIAN STUDENTS

A Cambodian educator, Mory Ouk, has worked extensively to help prepare the teachers and administrators of the Long Beach, California School Department to work more effectively with the growing population of Cambodian students. We present here Mory Ouk's "Suggestions for Teachers." Many of the suggestions, you will find, apply equally well to students from other language groups who are not yet fluent in English.

Because Cambodian is a phonic language, spelling a word both vocally and visually helps the student to understand the pronunciation, to understand the concept, as well as to remember the word.

Dictating out loud is very helpful to the Cambodian student. This helps them to check their knowledge in English vocabulary, to find the weakness in their writing and helps develop their ability to listen and comprehend.

A natural process of learning takes place through intermingling with native English speakers. The listening, practicing, and playing together is very effective. It is difficult for non-English- speaking Cambodian students to make friends with American children, so help from the teacher is very appreciated.

The word order of English sentences is completely different from the Cambodian word order and therefore beginners will make grammatical mistakes as they try to transfer the concept from their own language to English. If the teacher is understanding and helpful they will be able to correct these mistakes and not be afraid to speak or to write.

Southeast Asian students find it very difficult to view a film or TV program in the classroom and get much of anything from it. Often the sound is not good, the people talk too fast, and the vocabulary and concepts are totally new. The students need some guidelines to know what to expect, what to look for,and what to listen for.

Most Khmer students are not familiar with the library. They think the library is a bookstore. The teacher should explain the library to them, show them how to use it, and then encourage them to use it.

Because of the language barrier, it is impossible for NEP (non-English-speaking) and LEP (limited-English-speaking) students to take notes when the teacher is explaining something in the normal American speech. It is extremely helpful to at least have some clearly written notes on the board for them to copy, and this will help them follow along with the lesson being explained.

Most Cambodian families are not familiar with the American educational system. They do not know how to do independent study at home without a specific assignment from the teacher. Parents request that more and more homework be assigned because the children will learn more and they will be kept out of trouble.

The most important ingredients a teacher needs in working with these children are patience, love, and compassion. Once

the children feel that the teacher understands their difficulties they will gain confidence in the teacher. They will believe in the teacher, and the teacher becomes their second God. Because the children believe in the teacher, they sincerely want to learn, they will try to talk, to ask questions, to express themselves, to tell the truth, to obey, and do everything the teacher wants them to do.

As a Cambodian, I thank you very much for your compassion, your patience, your love, and your help!

RESOURCES

People

The North Zone Office has personnel designated to help teachers deal more effectively with students from diverse backgrounds:

Coordinator of Bilingual and Multicultural Educational Resources: Karen Law

Bilingual Field Coordinators: Rosario Cascio (Italian); Brian Chou (Cambodian); Nilda Nazario and Amelia Trinidad (Spanish); Hung Tran (Vietnamese); Isabel Yee (Chinese).

Sources for Materials

Savanna Books (specializing in books about children of color. The owner is available to present workshops or displays of her materials). 858 Massachusetts Ave, Central Square, Cambridge. 868-3423.

JACP catalogue (featuring books about Asians and Asian-Americans, in English and in Asian languages). 414 East Third Avenue, San Mateo, California 94401. Toll-free telephone: 1-800-874-2242.

Tuesday's Child (featuring books to "help clients build their own Black Heritage Library. A catalogue is available). 28 Hart Circle, Randolph, MA 02368. 961-4164.

Media Matters, a catalogue of non-print resources available on loan (at no charge) from NECEA, The New England Center for Equity Assistance, 300 Brickstone Square, Suite 900, Andover, MA 01810.

The Children's Museum: Resource Library (culture kits, books) and "Kids' Bridge" (exhibit on cultural diversity in the Boston area). 300 Congress St. Boston, MA 02210-1034. 426-6500

Books for Ideas

Turning on Learning: Five Approaches for Multicultural Teaching Plans for Race, Class, Gender, and Disability. C. Grant and C. Sleeter. Columbus, OH: Merrill. 1989.

A World of Difference: Teacher/Student Study Guide. Boston: Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith and Facing History and Ourselves National Foundation. 1986.

The Mango Tree, Stories Told and Re-Told by the Children of Cambridge. Cambridge: Lifelines, Cambridge Oral History Project.

Additional Resources

Cultural Links: A Multicultural Resource Guide. A. Giudice & S. Wortis. Cambridge: The Multicultural Project for Communication and Education, 1987.

Empowerment Bibliography: Theme Centered Bibliography of Children's Literature: Books with Themes of Personal, Cultural and Social Empowerment. E. Pytowska and G. Willett. Cambridge: Savanna Books, 1987.

Multicultural Resource Guide for the Boston Public Schools. Diana Saez, editor. Arts in Progress, 555 Amory St., Jamaica Plain, MA 02130. 524-1160.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

GAYLE B. BARTLEY teaches fifth grade at the Hurley School. She has been teaching for six years, four in Boston. Her family tree includes African-Americans, Native Americans (Cherokee), West Indians, and German/Irish. A mini United Nations!

KATHLEEN BEGLEY teaches fourth grade at the Hurley School. She has been teaching for 23 years. She is first-generation Irish-American.

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JULIA E. MONTAÑEZ is now teaching a fourth-grade bilingual class at the Hurley. She has taught grades two through five in her 10 years in the system as a teacher. Before that, she worked as a teachers' aide for seven years. She is Puerto Rican.

ROLANDO RIVERA teaches a bilingual second-third grade at the Hennigan School. This is his second year in the system. He is Puerto Rican.

JAN WELLMAN is a first-grade teacher at the Blackstone School. She has been in Boston for three of her five years in teaching. She is a white American.

JANICE ROOK is an elementary English as a Second Language teacher at the Tobin School. She has been teaching in Boston for 22 years.

VIRGINIA VOGEL ZANGER is a former Boston Public Schools teacher who currently trains teachers and administrators and teaches graduate courses on intercultural education. She discovered her Jewish identity while attending high school in Latin America.

These are some of the reasons we enjoy working with diverse student groups:

- "Because one, I learn so much about different cultures, and two, students learn so much about different cultures."

- "The drop-out rate of minority students is higher than that of non-minorities. To me, this is an indication that we as teachers are not being effective in meeting minority needs. Strategies must be developed to meet these needs in more creative ways."

- "What I like best is that the teacher can learn so much about their students and parents: what they think, their own perceptions of issues. You get to know the students on a personal basis and through daily experiences. Students offer a lot of resources and potential that as teachers and adults we don't see. Also, students can learn so much about each other, giving and reinforcing their values and respect. I try to give them the tools to be effective, to deal later on with society and their immediate surroundings."

- Each student is special, different, and unique. If we are different from our brothers and sisters, imagine how different are children from different cultures."

- The best thing about working with a diverse group of students is being able to use the students as teaching tools. For example, if my class is discussing the weather, I usually ask the students from different countries to tell the other what it was like where they came from. The students love learning this way."

- "The most important part of working with a diverse group of students is that I get to be a learner. My Anglo and Hispanic students challenge my assumptions every day. They have made me much more aware of the importance of becoming more knowledgeable about my own culture as well as knowing more about the cultures of those I teach. Secondly, the real world is diverse. Our educational arena then allows us to practice constantly that which we really do live every day."